

**REMARKS**

Claims 36 through 85 are pending in this case. Claims 36, 49, 62, 63, 71, 73 and 74 have been amended.

Claims 36, 49, 62, 63, 71, 73 and 74 were objected to based on informalities. Those claims have been amended in the manner suggested by the Examiner. The suggested amendments do not narrow the scope of the claims in any way.

Applicants note with appreciation the indication that Claims 62 through 85 are allowed.

Claims 36-45 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) over the APA in view of Furukawa et al. (U.S. Patent No. 4,951,121, hereinafter Furukawa). Claims 36, 46-49, and 59-61 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) over Teraguchi et al. (U.S. Patent 6,521,998, hereinafter Teraguchi) in view of Nishii et al. (US PgPub 2003/0109088, hereinafter Nishii) and Furukawa. Claims 49-58 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) over the APA in view of Nishii and Furukawa.

With regard to the rejections of independent claim 36, Applicants comment as follows.

Claim 36 has been amended to recite, inter alia, a first metal layer that comprises any metal material selected from a group comprising  $Ni_zN_{1-z}$ , and  $Pd_zN_{1-z}$ , (where,  $0 < z < 1$ ). In the Reasons for Allowance set forth at page 8 of the Office Action, a substantially identical limitation in claim 62 was found to be allowable subject matter. In view of the amendment to claim 36, it is believed that claim 36 is now clearly allowable for substantially similar reasons to claim 62.

With regard to the rejections of independent 49, Applicants comment as follows.

Claim 49 has been amended to recite, inter alia, a first metal layer comprises any metal material selected from a group comprising  $Ni_{z4}N_{1-z4}$  (where,  $0.5 \leq z4 \leq 0.85$ ), and  $Pd_{z5}N_{1-z5}$  (where,  $0.5 \leq z5 \leq 0.85$ ). A substantially identical limitation was found by the

Examiner, at page 8 of the Office Action, to be allowable subject matter in connection with claim 74. Applicants submit that amended claim 49 is allowable for substantially similar reasons to claim 74.

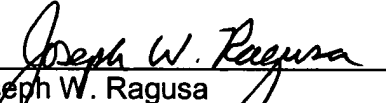
The other claims in this application are each dependent from one or another of the independent claims discussed above and are therefore believed patentable for the same reasons. Since each dependent claim is also deemed to define an additional aspect of the invention, however, the individual reconsideration of the patentability of each on its own merits is respectfully requested.

This Amendment in Response to Final Office Action is believed clearly to place this application in condition for allowance and its entry is therefore believed proper under 37 C.F.R. § 1.116. At the very least, however, it is believed clear that the formal objections have been overcome. Accordingly, entry of this Amendment After Final Rejection, as an earnest effort to advance prosecution and reduce the number of issues, is respectfully requested.

In view of the above amendment, applicant believes the pending application is in condition for allowance.

Dated: February 6, 2006

Respectfully submitted,

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